

I-85 EXPRESS LANES: OVERVIEW AND BENEFITS

Overview

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes such as the I-85 Express Lanes allow qualified carpools and transit to use the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes for free, while other vehicles would use the lanes for a fee. The fee rises and falls with the amount of traffic in the lane to keep the HOT lanes free flowing, thus providing more reliable travel times for commuters.

Benefits

While no strategy can be expected to eliminate congestion, HOT lanes have the potential to provide a variety of benefits to both motorists and transit users. These benefits include:

Trip Time Reliability

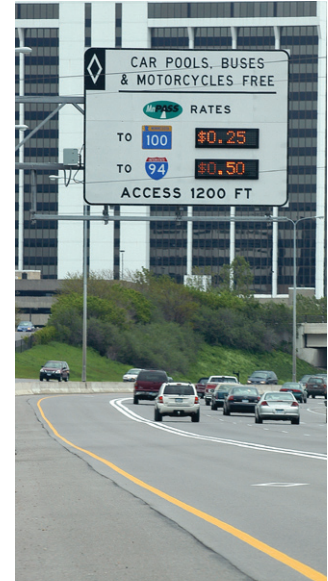
Traffic volumes on HOT lanes are assessed to ensure consistent and reliable travel times, particularly during peak travel periods. The U.S. Department of Transportation's performance standard for HOT lanes states that vehicles should maintain average speeds of at least 45 mph (90 percent of the time). On Minneapolis' MnPASS Express Lane, speeds of 50 mph are maintained over 95 percent of the time. In addition, traffic on Seattle's HOT lane (State Route 167) consistently flows freely during all hours of operation at speeds between 50 and 55 mph.

Commuter Choices

In congested corridors with HOV facilities and transit service, HOT lanes provide Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) motorists with an additional travel choice: the option of paying for a dependable, congestion-free trip. Prices displayed on variable message signs provide potential users with the information they need in order to decide whether to use the HOT lane or the adjacent general-purpose lanes. Experience from other HOT lane projects suggests that single drivers use the lane on an as needed basis and value the HOT lane option for activities, including getting to an important meeting on time, picking up a child from day care, or attending a family sporting event.

Transit Enhancements

Transit riders are still able to use HOT lanes for free. In addition, transit users can depend on reliable trip times for their commute. Moreover, other HOT lane projects across the country report that travel times for transit remained the same or even decreased with the introduction of HOT lanes. Finally, significant transit enhancements in the form of new buses, increased express bus service, and new park and ride lots often accompany HOT lanes.



Source: U. S. Department of Transportation

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